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ABSTRACT

Converting research findings into practical applications is an important concept to education but one that has been overlooked by the educational research community until recently. While a model for turning concepts into practical applications has been developed and field tested for human service practitioners, the model has not been directly applied in education. It appears that social science researchers have not put the resources into disseminating their research that they have put into the research effort itself. A recently proposed solution is "social marketing," a conceptual system for thinking through the change process which places a high priority on identifying the needs, perceptions, preferences, reference groups, and behavioral patterns of audiences, and tailoring innovations to best suit audience characteristics. This paper describes an application of social marketing concepts to the education dissemination process, outlining the tasks performed during the needs assessment phase, the research and development phase, the dissemination phase, and the utilization profit phase. A comparison between business and industrial marketing and social marketing is drawn and further analyzed within the framework of the four basic component marketing fields: (1) product; (2) promotion; (3) place; and (4) price. It is noted that the model has been field tested in a social organizational setting with results that warrant further study in education. (13 references) (GL)

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AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION OF DISSEMINATION AND IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION.

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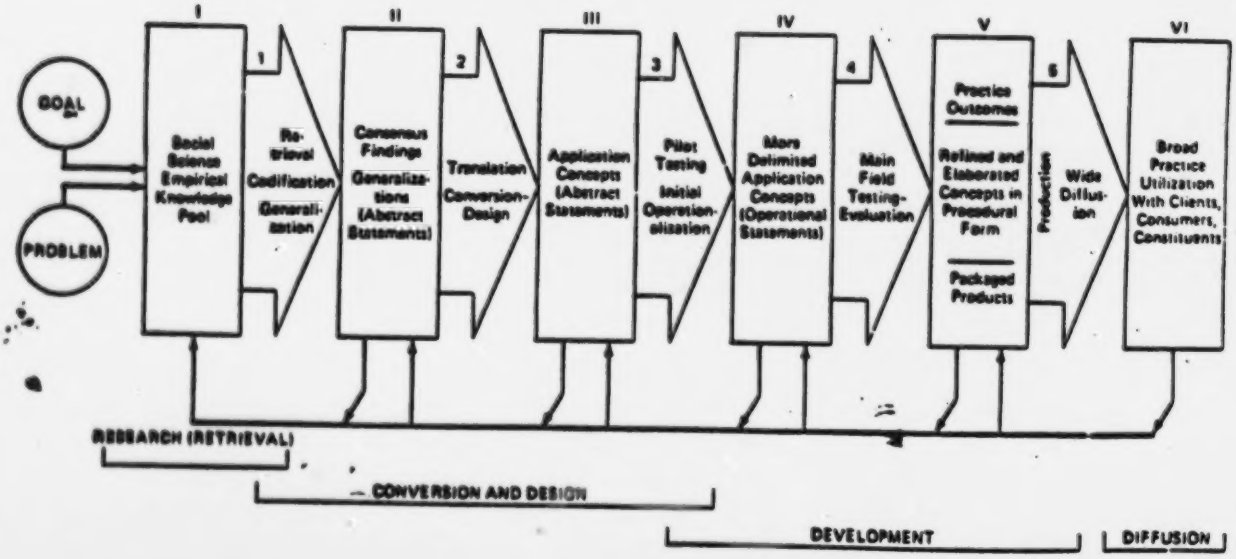
AN ALTERNATIVE APPROACH TO STRENGTHENING THE CONNECTION OF DISSEMINATION AND IMPROVEMENT IN EDUCATION.

At a recent NIE planning conference [1] in Washington, D.C. on Dissemination and Improvement in Education the NIE Director in addressing the conference indicated that the Institute needed to further its efforts in "getting research findings off the shelf and into the hands of the teacher."

This is an important concept to education but unfortunately one that has been somewhat overlooked by the educational research community until quite recently.

To further emphasize the importance of converting research findings into practice application Rothman, Teresa, et. al. (1983) have developed a model and field-tested the development of strong linking mechanisms between research and practice. The model describes the operations involved in the creation and distribution of need-specific practice strategies and tools for human service practitioners, derived from basic social science research.

1. National Institute of Education, U.S. Dept. of Education: Strengthening the Connection of Dissemination and Improvement in Education: A Planning Workshop, Washington, D.C., June 24, 1984.



SOURCE: Jack Rothman, SOCIAL R&D: Research and Development in the Human Services, © 1980, p. 23. Reprinted by permission of Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, N. J.

Rothman, Teresa, et. al. (1976) developed this model as a result of field-testing with a group of practitioners. The aim of this study was to explore new ways of turning concepts into practice applications. During this research it was found that one of the major obstacles for practitioners was understanding the research findings and seeing how they were applicable to their work situations and problems, One major product was a practitioner manual that guides the individual through the dissemination process and helps the user measure utilization, effectiveness. (Rothman, Teresa, et. al. 1981).

This research practice linking model has not been directly applied in education. A great deal of research, however, suggest that "linking" is an important concept for the total dissemination & improvement process. The National Science Foundation, in a paper prepared by the Rand Corporation, (1984), states that the "literature suggests a number of problems contributing to inadequacies in information transfer between the research and user communities." One of these problems concerns the mounting reports from users about difficulties in getting appropriate information in forms useful for problem solving and decision making.

In the social sciences, it appears that researchers have not put the resources into disseminating their research as they have into the research effort itself. Dissemination is a step in the social science research utilization process that has traditionally been given insufficient attention. One possible explanation for this attitude is given by Guba, (1968, p. 53) who makes this point:

> Diffusion is an activity regarded with some distaste by many members of the educational establishment, particularly the research community. It is often equated with hucksterism.

A recently proposed alternative approach to correct this image, is called

"Social Marketing". Social Marketing is discussed by Kotler (1975, p. 282):

> Social marketing provides a rich conceptual system for thinking through the problems of bringing about changes in the ideas or practices ---. The adoption of an idea, like the adoption of any product, requires a deep understanding of the needs, perceptions, preferences, reference groups, and behavioral patterns of the --- audience, and the tailoring of messages, media "costs" and facilities to maximize the ease of adopting the idea.

In a later and more fully developed definition Kotler (1982 p. 490) states:

> Social marketing is the design, implementation, ---. It utilizes concepts of market segregation, consumer research, conceptual development, communications, facilitation, incentives, and exchange theory ---.

The author also feels that it provides audiences with new ideas and practices that meet their particular needs. "Social marketing" can therefore be an important phase of the social research and development process. It affords the educational researcher an alternative approach to the dissemination of research based educational concepts and practices. Therefore, the "social marketing" approach is fully consistent (when properly applied) with existing professional values of the education community, researchers and users alike. This is because it provides a means for linking research based knowledge to user based needs.

Illustrated below is an application of social marketing concepts to the education dissemination process.

Marketing Concepts Applied to Education

Product Component

Business/Industry	Social Organization (Education)
1. Needs Analysis/Assessment Phase	
Determine target Audience needs	Determine target Audience needs

Marketing Concepts Applied to Education

1. Needs Analysis/Assessment Phase (cont.)

Determine target Audience wants	Determine target Audience wants

2. Research & Development Phase

Knowledge generation (Product Development)	Knowledge generation (Concept Development)
Performance testing	Concept generalization
Product Redesign	Translation Conversion design
Product Redesign	Translation Conversion design

Promotional Component

3. Dissemination/Diffusion Phase

Channels for distribution and response (i.e. retail outlets, representatives, etc.)	Points of entry into an organization & reference group appeal.

Price Component

4. Utilization Profit Phase

Cost-benefit analysis reduce tangible costs.
Benefit to the user.

What the above chart is attempting to illustrate is the application of business and industry marketing concepts to a social marketing concept for education. Hopefully, this provides a more guided and systematic method of developing innovative tools and strategies to employ in disseminating educational research improvements.

The comparison between business/industrial marketing and social marketing can be analyzed within the framework of four basic component marketing fields: product; promotion; place; and price (for a complete discussion see Rothman, Teresa, et. al. 1983 pp. 31-43).

Product Component

Both business and social organizations must determine the needs

and wants of the "target audiences", customers &/or clients. This then is referred to as the needs analysis & assessment. As a result of needs analysis, if necessary, the Research and Development process phase is undertaken.

In social science research and development as with business and industry research and development several steps are involved. Both involve a knowledge generation step that produces data about an existing product/concept or the development of a new product/concept. In business and industry knowledge generation supports a "product" concept where as in social sciences the "product" is an idea or concept to be developed. As a result of this step in business product development, performance testing and product redesign would occur. In social marketing concept development would lead to concept generalization, translation and conversion-design (See Rothman 1974 & 1980, Rothman, Teresa, et. al., 1976, 1977, 1978, 1981 for a more complete discussion). It is at this point that the linkage between social knowledge generation and the conversion concept-generalization is most critical in social research and development. This has been discussed at the outset of this paper.

Promotional Component

It is here where business has developed a comprehensive marketing plan including such marketing techniques as advertising, personal selling, publicity, and sales promotion. Social Marketing promotional techniques are in their infancy with only a few conceptual and action-research examples currently available in Fox & Kotler 1980; Kotler 1975 represents a conceptual scheme for social marketing (promotion) including social marketing Specialists or Social Engineers, (Rothman, Teresa, et. al. 1983) advertising, personal selling, publicity, and sales promotion.

Place Component (cont.)

Business uses channels for distribution and response (i.e. retail outlets, representatives, etc.) In social organizations the channels could be personal contact approaches (high intensity) and mass communications (low intensity.) (See Rothman, Teresa, et. al. 1983 p. 45-49.) In addition to the above social marketing would also include points of entry into an organization as well as a reference group appeal.

Price Component

In business the bottom line or profit is the key price component. In a social setting this is much more difficult to empirically delineate. Of course such techniques as cost benefit analysis, reduction of intangible costs and most importantly, benefits to the user should all be considered and measured where possible.

The above model has been field tested in a social organizational setting with some interesting results that warrant further study in education. (See Rothman, Teresa, et. al. 1983.)

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